Ancient Albania

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THE Albanians, or *Shqipëtars*[1] as they rightfully call themselves, inhabit the territory covered by ancient Epirus and the country of the Illyrians, a country extending from the old Montenegro on the north to the Gulf of Arta, or Ambracia, on the south, and from the coast of the Adriatic on the west to the central chain of the Pindus Mountains on the east, or, in other words, Albania is situated on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea, southwest of Yugoslavia and north of Greece. Therefore, Albania is a Balkan country, not only because of her position, but principally by reason of her geographical characteristics, for the greater part of her area consists of the Balkan mountain ranges and her rivers belong to the same river system of the Balkan peninsula. Epirus is wild, mountainous and scenic; in fact, is the veritable Switzerland of the Balkans abounding in valleys of exceptional beauty and fertility.

000 The ancient Epirots were as distinct from

[1] [i.e., Sons of Eagle; See category 116, p. xv -- Analyst]

3: Redlich S-3 (no date) 1936 EG1 Albania EG1

Illyria

IN its beginning, the Kingdom of Illyria comprised the actual territories of Dalmatia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, and northern and central Albania with a large part of modern Serbia. But in the course of its development, it extended all along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. Scutari was its capital just as it is now the capital of central and northern Albania. These boundaries were never clearly defined, and the name "Illyria" was ethnological rather than a geographical term. The older Greek historians wrote of "the Illyrians" not so much as a solid people but in reference to those Illyrian tribes inhabiting the regions extending eastward from the Adriatic between Liburnia and Epirus. (The Latin name, "Illyricum," was not synonymous with Illyria, for it was a name applied to divisions of the Roman Empire, the boundaries of which were frequently changed and often included an area much greater than Illyria proper.)

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Epirus

THE southern part of the Kingdom of Albania of today was the ancient Epirus. This territory was bounded on the north by the Ionian Sea and on the south by the Ambracian Gulf. Its landward sides were next to Illyria, Macedonia and Thessaly. The terrain is essentially mountainous. About the fourth century before Christ these Epirots were divided in fourteen tribes. Epirus at this time exerted no small influence on Thessaly through the oracle of Dodona. Historically, the part of Epirus was passive. Epirus was divided into the smaller kingdoms of Molossia, Thesprotia, Chaonia, etc., which were formed into an Epirotic League.

The chieftains of Molossia, who dominated all Epirus, claimed to be descended from Pyrrhus, son of Achilles, who settled in the country after the fall of Troy. (Plutarch also relates that Achilles was known in this country under the name of "Aspetos" which in Albanian means "swift.") Upon Pyrrhus' death his kingdom was transmitted to Molossus, his son by Andromache. 13

3: Redlich S-3 (no date) 1936 EG1 AlbaniaEG/

Physical Features

ALBANIA, situated on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea, southwest of Yugoslavia and north of Greece, two and a half hours distance from Rome by aeroplane, has an area of about 11,000 square miles (approximately the size of Belgium). The larger part of the country is mountainous; amongst the geographical and geological divisions of the country the most familiar are roughly as follows: Northern Albania consisting principally of mountains; Central Albania, between the Mati and the Viosa rivers, is comprised of littoral plains; Southern Albania is mountainous to the greater extent.

From this simple picture we see that Albania consists of a marginal lowland, crossed by powerful perennial streams, and a mountainous hinterland which encloses small fertile basins. The Albanian Alps in the north consist mostly of massive limestones rising to a height of 6,500 to 8,500 feet. Scattered among these ranges are the rich summer pas-

ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

000 mellowing into ripeness on the mountains
137 surrounding Elbasan. These same mountains
are well-timbered, giving rich promise of
136 future wealth. However, these mountainous
forests are so dense and wild that they are
veritably thick with bears, wild boars, wolves
and other savage animals, an excellent but
dangerous opportunity for the game-hunter.

131 Being the center from which all the roads radiate; to Korcha (Korça) in one direction, and to Durazzo (Durrës) in the other, Elbasan may be rightly called the "naval" of Albania. This old center of Turkish strife is also the natural boundary between the Ghegs and the Tosks: northern and southern
197 Albanians. It also marks the difference in the pronunciation of the native dialects. North of the River Shkumbi many words have an "n" where on the southern side these same words have an "r." The dialect spoken by the inhabitants of Elbasan is intelligible to the natives in either of the extremes of the country, being proverbially as beautiful as the Greek of Athens and the Turkish of Constantinople. For this reason the native tongue, as spoken by an Elbasanian, has been adopted as the basis of the language of the whole country.

[Of Librazhd--Analysis] 124

Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
Albania EGI

7 ALBANIAN INTERLUDE AND BALTIC VISTA

I

LITTLE ALBANIA, where mountains rise in serried ranks behind a marshy, malaria-infested coast, was perhaps the first satellite to reveal the nature of Communist rule fully and unreservedly. Living uneasily under Turkish domination well past the nineteenth century in a country not unlike the Great Smokies, the Albanians have been the least known and the most handicapped nation in Europe. Like many a mountain folk in the United States—whether in Tennessee or in Vermont—they have been influenced culturally by the inaccessibility of their villages, the primitive state of their agriculture, and the dearth of modern means of transportation. Even proximity to the sea has been of limited value because delta silt has impeded navigation throughout history. Outside the cities, family and tribal solidarity remains stronger than national sentiment. But, while the Albanians have been dependent on foreign powers for security and prosperity, they are a patriotic folk and a martial one.

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

The Straits of Otranto, where the waters of the Adriatic
131 merge into the main basin of the Mediterranean, divide the
133 Apulian heel of Italy from the land of Albania — the setting of my tale. The Italian shore is flat, featureless, and without a considerable harbour; but on the Albanian side the coastal range of the Dinaric Alps curves back from the sea, as if to protect the mainland approaches to the port of Valona, which lies where the straits are narrowest. Albania is thus a fortified enclave on the west coast of the Balkan Peninsula, and the Power that controls it commands the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. This enclave, moreover, forms a natural bridgehead for Italy in the Balkans: from Valona to Salonika is but two hundred miles; and, though the mountains of the interior present notable obstacles to communications, a Power established across this neck of the peninsula would command two of the three key positions on the roads that lead from Europe to the East.

175 The fate of a territory of such strategic importance could scarcely be a matter of indifference to the Powers; and the briefest review of Albania's past suggests that it has been an enduring cause of contention between them in their efforts to acquire or to preserve a dominant position in the Adriatic or the Eastern Mediterranean. The rising sea power of Rome clashed with the navies of Illyria and Epirus, and subjected those kingdoms to her rule, in order to confirm her supremacy in the Adriatic. Once the control of the straits was assured, the new provinces were converted into a base for imperial expansion; and Dyrrachium, the modern Durazzo, became the head of the Via Egnatia, the great artery of empire which ran through Thessalonika (Salonika) to the East. Rome's Byzantine successor held fast to the Albanian coasts to preserve the Eastern Mediterranean from Adriatic enemies, until Norman sea power supplanted her there, and gave the land its present name. In the wake of the Normans came armies of Crusaders, who crossed from Italy into Albania to follow the ancient Roman road to the East. The ephemeral empires of Bulgaria and Serbia spread, in their turn, to control the entrance to the Adriatic, while the more enduring mercantile power of Venice long strove, and with varying success, to establish itself on the

8:Coon E-5 (1929-30;46-48)1950 EG1 Albania EG1
Highland Ghegs

000 Dinaric Europeans should not differ from other Europeans, or Dinaric American Indians from other American Indians, etc., in unaffected features, such as skin, hair, and eye color, hair form, hair distribution, etc.

In "The Races of Europe," I pointed out that all over central Europe different populations had been experiencing a steady rise in the cephalic index from about the 6th century A.D. onward. I attributed this to the re-emergence of genetic elements derived from pre-Neolithic populations. As farmers and herdsmen penetrated Europe, the hunters and gatherers withdrew to the forests and mountains. Eventually the latter were assimilated as a socially submerged element in the general population. The historic increase in brachycephaly was thus due to the selective value of that particular head form as their conquerors killed themselves off in war or were selectively reduced by emigration.

Weidenreich has recently taken the position that brachycephalization is a progressive evolutionary step. He claims that it produces a more efficient container for the brain than a long, narrow skull; that a round head is best suited for the requirements of the erect posture.[5] Whether or not this thesis is mechanically correct, Weidenreich has done a service in lending his support to the manifest conclusion that European brachycephaly is endemic and not of recent derivation from other continents. That in an isolated population it may be dominant is one of our present subjects of investigation.

●131 161 The present material is suited for such a study. The land of the tribal Ghegs is a small country, little more than 3500 miles square. Its population probably runs to about 250,000, of whom 90,000 may be Catholics and 160,000 Moslems.* In 1930 we were told that the population of Mirdita was about 11,000—all Catholic; that of Puka 14,000, of whom 8000 were Moslems and 6000 Catholics. These figures are

[5] Weidenreich, 1945.

* Since this monograph was written it has become fashionable in America to employ the more correct form, *Muslim*. It would have been pleasant if this change could have been made here and throughout the text. However, so much time has been spent, and so many corrections have been made, that I beg the readers' indulgence for retaining the *o* and *e* in place

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1 [contin. on p 4b -- Analyst]

8:Coon E-5 (1929-30;46-48)1950 EG1 Albania EG1
Highland Ghegs

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probably too low. The 1927 census reported 814,485 persons in Albania; the 1930 census raised the figure to 1,003,124, of whom 104,184 were Catholics. The 1930 census gives the population density for Albania as 36.5 per square kilometer, or 102 per square mile. The mountain Gheg country, newly divided into 3 provinces without regard to tribal boundaries, was said to have 100 inhabitants per square mile in Dibra province, 75 in Scutari province, and 64 in Kossovo province.

In 1930 the land area of Albania was 10,600 square miles. With a population of 1,003,124 the density was thus 94 per square mile, not 102. If we subtract 8 from each of the other figures, we obtain the following corrections: Dibra—92, Scutari—67, Kossovo—56. This can be checked by means of the Catholic figures. Of the 104,000 Catholics at least 14,000 live in cities, leaving no more than 90,000 on tribal lands. Tribal lands exclusively Catholic cover ca. 1225 square miles; those occupied by Catholics and Moslems together about 440 square miles. Thus 1450 square miles may be considered Catholic country, and with a population of 90,000 this yields 62 persons per square mile, which accords with the corrected census figure. Striking a point between the Dibra and Kossovo figures we obtain about 70 per square mile for Moslem lands, which cover about 2300 square miles. This yields a population of about 160,000. One hundred and sixty plus 90 equals 250. Hence our estimate of a total Gheg population of 250,000.[6]

124

Our series of nearly 1100 men may represent one per cent of the adult male total, a large sample, compared to other national surveys of equal detail. It was drawn from all tribes and from every part of each tribe. It includes chief elders, gendarmes, farmers, what artisans there are, *hodjas*, and in short a complete cross section of the population, both regionally in most tribes, and in regard to differentiations based on rank and occupation. We did not measure

of *u* and *i*. Actually, Arabic vowels are few, rudimentary, and unindicated in ordinary writing. Semantically, they are of less importance than in Turkish, whence the form *Moslem*, and it was the Turks who converted the seventy per cent of the Albanians who are Muslims. Few of them, I suspect, will object to the book on these grounds.

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[6] Almagià, 1932; *Arbenia*, June 1, 1930, for census figures; *National Catholic Almanac*, 1946, p. 93.

136 As might be expected the mountains and forests of this little-developed country still harbor a number of dangerous wild animals. The lion of Homeric times is gone, but the bear, the wolf, and the wild boar remain. Deer graze on the high mountain slopes, and in the forests, but the Ghegs will not kill them. The only wild animals of any economic importance are the various members of the weasel family, particularly martens, which a number of mountaineers trap for fur. Otherwise the fauna is a nuisance, since bears and wolves will steal sheep and kill cattle, and flocks need constant guarding by one or more men with rifles and a number of ferocious dogs.

● 131 It is in this environment, which must have changed but little since Roman and even earlier times, that the tribal Ghegs have survived until the present day, retaining a language and customs which carry them back to the Iron Age. The land forms, the climate, the geographical position away from main routes of travel and migration, all combine to make the mountains and forests of Ghegnia one of the most marginal and isolated regions of Europe. It is a true refuge area, comparable to the Caucasus and the western Himalayan reaches, the Appalachians, and the Ozarks.

1[See cat. 116, pp. 8a - 10b --Analyst]